

# The Stein Collection and World War II

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In the summer of 1918, Lionel Barnett, the British Museum's Keeper of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts, penned a letter to his friend Aurel Stein. By then Stein had returned from his Third Expedition to Central Asia, and his reputation as a pioneer in Central Asian scholarship was well established. Barnett began by paying tribute to Stein's contribution: 'You have been, both literally and figuratively, a Columbus of science, discovering and charting new worlds of precious knowledge.'<sup>1</sup>

At the time Stein was camped on Mohand Marg, the Kashmiri alpine hillside to which he retreated throughout his long life. There Stein was putting the final touches to *Serindia*, his scholarly account of his second expedition from which he returned with the Dunhuang manuscripts. Barnett was in Wales, where high above the seaside town of Aberystwyth the neo-classical grandeur of the newly constructed National Library of Wales impressed Stein's friend. Barnett continued:

In one respect I am (for the time being) like you: I am on the top of a hill. The National Library of Wales has been built with fine judgment on the summit of the hills which surround Aberystwyth in a semicircle, so that we have on the one side the sea in all its glory and on the other the everlasting hills, green and purple. The Library has been designed on fine generous lines: would to Heaven the builders of the B.M. had had equal foresight. I shall be here until the 5th September. . . For the present (i.e. for some years to come) the mss. that are to revert to our Department will be kept in their present home, all together in glass cases.<sup>2</sup>

The manuscripts in the Stein Collection were not destined to remain in their London home for many more years. They would take temporary shelter in Aberystwyth on the same hill from where Barnett wrote to Stein in the closing months of World War I. No one could have anticipated then that little more than 20 years later the world would again be at war, or that this would prompt an unprecedented movement of cultural treasures across Britain.

The National Library of Wales was in its infancy in 1918, and the imposing grey stone building had been occupied for just two years. Yet when Barnett wrote, it was providing war-time refuge to material from the British Museum. A consignment had been sent by rail from London in February 1918. It included 22 cases of Oriental books and manuscripts, 21 cases of printed books and maps, 47 of manuscripts, parcels of prints and drawings and records of the British Museum's trustees. Although World War I was in its final months, other loads followed in March and May. Stein's antiquities, including the Dunhuang manuscripts, remained in London. The main impact of World War I on the Stein Collection was that the planned transfer to India of part of it was delayed until the end of hostilities for fear of destruction of the treasures en route.

The storage of British Museum material in Aberystwyth in World War I was relatively brief. By January 1919 most of it had returned to Bloomsbury. Nonetheless, the war-time safe-keeping provided in Wales set a precedent.

During the 1920s, Lionel Giles, the British Museum's Assistant Keeper of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts, continued to catalogue Stein's Chinese manuscripts, and Stein's magnum opus *Serindia* was published in 1921. By the end of the decade, Stein was planning his

fourth Central Asian expedition. But hostility to his activities forced him to abandon the venture mid-way in 1931. In Europe, the political climate was becoming increasingly ominous. When Hitler became German Chancellor in 1933 concerns grew about the possibility of another European conflict. The directors of Britain's national cultural institutions met with the Minister (then First Commissioner) of Works, William Ormsby-Gore, to discuss plans to evacuate the most valuable treasures in the event of another war. After that meeting, the Secretary of the British Museum, Dr Arundell Esdaile wrote to the National Library of Wales in January 1934 asking whether it might again provide the 'hospitality' extended during the war of 1914–18:

The deposit would consist of books, manuscripts, and prints and drawing, and not, of course, of antiquities, for which other repositories are being sought.<sup>3</sup>

The National Library of Wales promptly agreed to Esdaile's request. But it was another three years before an idea was raised that would have repercussions for the Stein Collection. Questions were asked at a meeting of the council of the National Library of Wales in October 1937 about what precautions had been taken to safeguard its own treasures in the event of air raids.<sup>4</sup> In the ensuing discussion, the library's vice-president, Sir Evan Davies Jones, a civil engineer who had been involved in the construction of the Severn Tunnel and the Manchester Ship Canal, suggested an innovative solution: the creation of an underground tunnel.

The idea was well received and the library's architect, Dr Charles Holden, was asked to draw plans for a horseshoe-shaped chamber tunnelled into rock on nearby land belonging to the library. Holden is best known today for having designed many of London's Underground stations, the University of London's Senate House and, with sculptor Jacob Epstein, Oscar Wilde's tomb in the Père Lachaise cemetery, in Paris.

The National Library of Wales sought funding, but Treasury opposed financing a purpose-built underground repository since this would open the floodgates to other provincial institutions wanting similar accommodation. Officials argued it was inappropriate to provide a bomb-proof shelter to an institution located in a safe area when facilities had been denied to national museums and galleries. Treasury also feared that funding a shelter for art treasures would hinder its ability to resist requests for the construction of shelters for humans.<sup>5</sup>

Nonetheless, the National Library of Wales went ahead with its plan and contracted Wolverhampton builders Henry Willcock and Company. Construction began in August 1938, a month before the major European powers signed the Munich Agreement, an act of appeasement towards Nazi Germany. By then many believed war was inevitable, but the agreement bought time to prepare – as much as was possible – for another conflict. The effects of a war fought for the first time from the air rather than on land could not be predicted. As a war-time engineering scientist, Sir Derman Christopherson, later reflected:

The starting point of any account of the situation with regard to air warfare or its consequences for the civilian population, as

they appeared in 1939, must be to emphasize the total ignorance at that time of everybody and everything to do with the subject. The only evidence which existed of what happens when high explosive is dropped on a town was derived from experience in the Spanish Civil War, mainly from an attack on Guernica.<sup>6</sup>

At the beginning of the war, Wales was assumed to be safe from ground invasion and air attack. Naïve as this sounds today, it was even believed that the visibility of the National Library of Wales – atop a hillside known as Grogythan or Hangman's Hill – would help ensure its safety. David Jenkins, Librarian of the National Library of Wales from 1969 to 1979, described the prevailing attitude:

There was a general feeling during the late 1930s that in the event of war any land invasion from Europe would be targeted on the home counties of southern England, and that the Welsh coast would be immune from attack. Although there was nothing on the coast of Cardigan Bay to attract the attention of enemy bombers, a prominent building such as the National Library, which defied camouflage, actually lent itself as a navigational aid to bombers passing up the west coast of Britain, thus enhancing its security as a place of refuge.<sup>7</sup>

In this context, the decision to build the tunnel, made when the library was itself considered impregnable, was a singular one. With construction underway, the British Museum's director, Sir John Forsdyke, raised with the museum's standing committee the possibility of taking a stake in the chamber. The National Library of Wales had offered accommodation in the bomb-proof tunnel. This would cost the museum about £3000, half the estimated cost of building the tunnel. The committee agreed and asked Forsdyke to approach Treasury for a grant.<sup>8</sup> Treasury approved, provided savings were made elsewhere. The museum's Chief Scientific Officer, Dr Harold Plenderleith, travelled to Aberystwyth to inspect the excavation underway and reported that the tunnel was suitable for storing books and manuscripts.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout the British Museum, priority lists had been prepared of portable objects to be saved in case of an emergency. As Forsdyke noted:

In all the departments of the Museum and Library the material for evacuation had long been specified in order of priority as part of the routine precautions against fire.<sup>10</sup>

These lists formed the basis for the war-time evacuation. On the fire salvage list for the Department of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts in October 1938 were six items from the King's Library, including Stein's printed Diamond Sutra of 868 and, from the Chinese Library, Stein's collection of Chinese scrolls.<sup>11</sup> Their inclusion indicates how highly Stein's collection was regarded by the late 1930s, especially when viewed alongside the lists from other sections of the museum. The Greek and Roman priorities included the cameo-glass Portland Vase and the Chatsworth Head of Apollo while the Medieval priorities included the Lewis Chessmen and the Sutton Hoo treasure.<sup>12</sup>

The museum had stockpiled boxes in which to pack material for evacuation. 40 boxes were required for Stein's manuscript rolls. A number of disused cupboards and open presses were sent from the museum to Aberystwyth. According to Jacob Leveen, Deputy Keeper in the

#### Department of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts:

The cream of the collections in the Departments of Printed Books, Manuscripts, Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts, and practically the whole of the Department of Prints and Drawings and drawings belonging to the Department of Oriental Antiquities, were scheduled for removal to Aberystwyth.<sup>13</sup>

As Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia in March 1939 and tensions increased across Europe, in Wales excavation of the tunnel in the slate hillside hit technical problems. Additional work would be needed to line the structure, strengthen the walls and reinforce the floor with a concrete slab. It would take extra time and money. The total cost increased to £7000.

On 23 August, the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact was signed in Moscow. In London, the Home Office notified Forsdyke at the British Museum that war was imminent. It was time to evacuate the nation's treasures. Large sculptures were to go into the Aldwych tube, smaller antiquities were to go to Broughton House and Drayton House in Northamptonshire and books, manuscripts, prints and drawings were to go to the National Library of Wales. Several British Museum staff, headed by Dr Robin Flower, Deputy Keeper in the Department of Manuscripts, arrived in Aberystwyth on August 24 ready to receive the first consignment. The removal of material from the library began the same day, including ten tons of Western and Oriental books and manuscripts destined for Aberystwyth. The first container load arrived by rail on 25 August together with a British Museum escort. Forsdyke reported:

By noon on the third day... the most valuable material of every Department was in safety. Evacuation of Library material was continued for another week, by which time about 100 tons of it had been received at Aberystwyth, and the Keepers of the Departments did not wish to send any more. This quantity was made up of some 12,000 books, and about the same number of volumes of manuscripts and three-quarters of the collection of prints and drawings.<sup>14</sup>

The material included 171 cases from the Department of Oriental Books and Manuscripts containing 6000 books and manuscripts.<sup>15</sup> Leveen, a Hebrew scholar who was based in Aberystwyth during the war, later described some of the most precious items from his department that were removed to Wales. They included Syriac manuscripts, early illuminated Bibles, Haggadas and Korans. He also singled out the Stein Collection:

Of Chinese manuscripts which went to Aberystwyth, those discovered by that intrepid explorer, the late Sir Aurel Stein, in a walled-up chapel in the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas at Tunhuang in Chinese Turkestan, take first place.<sup>16</sup>

Exactly when the Stein Collection was sent to Aberystwyth is unclear. The importance afforded to the Diamond Sutra and other Stein scrolls suggests they would have been evacuated early, possibly in the first load sent from London before war was declared. Giles referred to their removal when he gave a lecture on Stein's Chinese manuscripts in London on 14 October 1941. He commented

that his unprinted catalogue had been completed 'some years ago, just before the MSS. were removed from the Museum for safety.'<sup>17</sup>

With the underground tunnel under construction when war broke out, Stein's scrolls were initially housed in the main building of the National Library of Wales along with other British Museum material. The available space was shared with treasures from other cultural institutions, including The National Gallery which sent several hundred pictures, items from Hampton Court and the Royal Society. With the influx of so much material, for several years the library building resembled a 'vast furniture repository'.<sup>18</sup> Its print room was allocated to the British Museum's Department of Prints and Drawings and the Department of Printed Books while Dr Flower, overseeing the British Museum staff, was assigned the president's room. The Department of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts was accommodated at one end of the Readers Room. This worried Leveen. Although the library was closed to the general public for about six years, the Readers Room remained open to permit holders throughout the war. Giles took up Leveen's concerns with Forsdyke:

Subject to your approval, I have decided that Leveen shall stay in Aberystwyth for the winter... [Leveen] reports the desirability of padlocks (with chains) for the presses containing our MSS, the locks of which are very flimsy and insecure. The total cost would probably not exceed £4.<sup>19</sup>

Forsdyke agreed. The director visited the National Library of Wales in October 1939, where he attended the annual meeting of its governing body, and wrote to Giles on his return:

I inspected Leveen's bookcase locks when I was at Aberystwyth, and it is true that anyone who wished to break them off could do so. Chains & padlocks will not stop such thieves, if they exist, but if such visual security will comfort Leveen's soul there is no reason why he should not have them.<sup>20</sup>

After more than a year's work, construction of the tunnel 200 metres down hill from the library was finished on 30 October 1939. As a result of the geological problems, the tunnel in the grey slate hillside was lined with a brick wall and an arched roof was built for extra protection. This meant the capacity of the tunnel was less than initially envisioned. The completed tunnel was approximately 2m wide, 3m high and 25m long. In width and height, although not in length, its dimensions were similar to those of Dunhuang's cave 17, the manuscript cave, from which Stein obtained the scrolls.

Having returned from nine months undertaking aerial surveying work in the Middle East in June 1939, Stein was in England when war was declared. He visited Oxford, Barton House in the Cotswolds – where Helen Allen, widow of his friend P.S. Allen, had a home – and spent time in London with Fred Andrews. Stein, then 76, was preparing to depart once again for India. Although he maintained an interest in the fate of his Turkestan finds long after they arrived in Britain, Stein does not appear to have been aware of the secret activity to shelter them underway in Wales. Mrs Allen bade farewell to Stein from Victoria Station on 9 November 1939. He would never see England, or the Dunhuang manuscripts, again.

As Stein left for India, in Wales atmospheric checks on the empty tunnel began. This would take months. Fans and electric heaters to regulate humidity and temperature had to be installed and tested before fragile works on paper, vellum, papyri and paper could be housed within it. Emergency equipment was also installed, including a hand-driven ventilation system in case of a power failure or the immobilisation of the supply by enemy action. It was Britain's first experiment in air-conditioned underground storage.<sup>21</sup> Steel racks were erected in the British Museum's section of the tunnel to house printed books and manuscripts that had been packed into millboard boxes. The tunnel – or Air Raid Precaution Chamber as it was called – began operation on 18 July 1940. The transfer of priority material from the National Library of Wales building into the tunnel began on 2 August 1940, and the move was completed by 22 August. Stein's scrolls were almost certainly moved into the tunnel at this time.

Additional material continued to arrive in Aberystwyth from Bloomsbury. Three small loads of manuscripts were sent to the National Library of Wales between January and June 1940, increasing the total number evacuated to 13,000. By then the most significant treasures had been removed from London and further dispersal was considered impracticable. The war intensified throughout 1940. By the middle of the year France fell to the Germans, and the threat of an invasion of Britain grew. The Blitz began in September, during which London and other cities across Britain including Liverpool, Birmingham and Cardiff, suffered eight months of repeated air attacks.

The unprecedented destruction prompted a fundamental rethink of the wisdom of storing the cultural treasures above ground. No building could be considered immune from aerial attack. This included the country houses to which the British Museum had sent material. Some were effectively tinder boxes with timber roofs that would be easily ignited by incendiary bombs. The location of military barracks and aerodromes near the houses also increased concerns, including the construction of an airfield less than two kilometres from Broughton House, in which were held the British Museum's collection of coins, medals and some portable antiquities.

By October 1940, not even the National Library of Wales was considered safe. There were fears that an attack could be mounted from neutral Ireland, across from Cardigan Bay. In addition, the library was on a route used by enemy aircraft. This posed the risk that stray bombs could be dropped by aeroplanes flying to or from more obvious targets such as the port city of Liverpool. The Ministry of Home Security decided not to camouflage the immense Aberystwyth building. It recommended evacuation as the least expensive means to protect the material.

The British Museum asked the Office of Works to remove everything in Aberystwyth not stored in the tunnel to a safer place.<sup>22</sup> Finding such a place would not be easy. Yorkshire's Skipton Castle, 25km north-west of Bradford, was one possibility. But the museum believed that the only truly safe storage was a purpose-built underground repository such as at Aberystwyth. As Forsdyke wrote:

The successful construction and use of the small air-conditioned tunnel at Aberystwyth showed that deep underground storage would be the best kind of protection if it could be provided on a large enough scale.<sup>23</sup>

The search for underground storage proved frustrating. Several quarries across Britain suitable for housing the Museum's cultural treasures had been requisitioned for military use. Eventually, a former stone quarry at Westwood, near Bradford-on-Avon in Wiltshire, was obtained for conversion into an air-conditioned repository. The top-secret site would be shared with the Victoria and Albert Museum. But work was needed before material could be transferred into the quarry, then being used to grow mushrooms. That work had yet to begin in April 1941 and it would be at least another six months before the quarry could be used, Forsdyke reported as the Blitz continued.<sup>24</sup> The National Gallery, meanwhile, had secured alternative underground accommodation. It began relocating its paintings to Manod Quarry, near Blaenau Ffestiniog in north-west Wales, in August 1941. The gallery, which had occupied the top floor of the National Library of Wales, vacated a month later and the space was taken by historians from the War Cabinet.<sup>25</sup>

As the British Museum waited for work on Westwood Quarry to be completed, rooms at Skipton Castle were prepared to receive all the books and manuscripts not held in the tunnel. But as Forsdyke noted: 'The castle afforded no better protection against bombs than the country houses.'<sup>26</sup> The need for safe refuge became even more acute after May 1941, when the British Museum in London was bombed. It was not the first time the building had been hit: a bomb had exploded in the King's Library in September 1940 – where the Diamond Sutra had previously been on display – destroying more than 400 volumes. But of all the attacks throughout the war this was the most destructive for the Museum. In the wake of the bombing on the night of 10-11 May, more than 200,000 volumes were lost, either in the flames or water damaged by fire hoses. The destruction prompted the removal to Aberystwyth of more material.

In April 1941 Leveen, based at the National Library of Wales, updated the new Keeper of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts, Alexander Fulton. (Fulton replaced Giles who had retired the previous year.) Leveen wrote that the 'cream of the collection' had not been sent to Skipton but remained in Aberystwyth.<sup>27</sup> The cream included Stein's manuscripts. Leveen referred to them a few days later when he again wrote to Fulton: 'The following Stein Rolls were accidentally omitted from my list of objects deposited in the tunnel.'<sup>28</sup> His omissions consisted of four boxes of rolls, including one of exhibited rolls.

Unlike the dry desert atmosphere that had preserved the scrolls for 1000 years in the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, the chamber in the Welsh hillside – within sight of the sea – needed special equipment and monitoring to regulate the humid environment. Leveen described conditions in the tunnel:

A system of inspection was instituted in conjunction with the National Library. The Tunnel was visited at regular intervals day and night. In addition, it was patrolled by the guards during the night. Portions of the contents were examined in turn to see how

the material stood up to its new surroundings. The results were highly satisfactory. Humidity and temperature readings were taken both in the day and at night. By means of an extremely sensitive instrument called a hygrometer it was possible to gauge the relative air humidity in the Tunnel. It was gratifying to find the needle plot as a rule an even and steady line on the chart and rarely rise above 65% of relative air humidity (the danger point was 70%). The temperature too was maintained at a reasonably constant level, dropping a few degrees, as was to be expected at night. It kept well within the margin of safety.<sup>29</sup>

By November 1941, structural work on Westwood Quarry was complete. But cultural material could not be transferred to the quarry until the longer days of the next year. The move to the quarry of the British Museum's printed books, manuscripts, prints and drawings held in Aberystwyth began on 24 February 1942 and took four months. The most valuable books and manuscripts stored in the tunnel were transferred last.<sup>30</sup>

With the move nearing completion, Leveen again updated Fulton. More than 300 boxes had been moved to the quarry. More than 40 boxes were scheduled for removal. But some items were to be retained at Aberystwyth. These included a number of Hebrew and Judao-Arabic books and manuscripts, which Leveen intended to study, Kharosthi documents, shelf-lists, descriptive lists and inventories. Also to be retained were Stein's rolls and tablets.<sup>31</sup>

In London, British Museum staff numbers were reduced. Staff became liable to conscription after 1941 when they were removed from the list of exempt occupations and the call-up age was raised. Fulton saw the specialists in his department reduced to half by 1943. During this period of staff reductions the location of one vital document connected to the Stein Collection raised concerns in London. Giles's unpublished Descriptive Catalogue, on which he had laboured for years, was missing. The British Museum's secretary J.H. Witney (who had replaced Esdaile after his retirement three years earlier) learned of its misplacement in a letter from the Department of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts. It reads:

In checking over the lists of material evacuated from this Department, I find the location of one item is uncertain. It is Giles's Descriptive Catalogue (ready for press) of the Stein or Tun-huang Manuscripts. It is done up in a package measuring 12×10×10 inches, or a little less, and was handed in by Giles at the Director's office in October 1940 for dispatch to Aberystwyth. The people at Aberystwyth have no record of its arrival there. Probably it has been placed in the security of the Director's Store (Basement Room 39). Would you be so kind as to let me have confirmation of this for entry in the Departmental records.<sup>32</sup>

A handwritten file note three days later could find no trace of Giles's manuscript. It was another three years before the document was discovered by the museum's assistant secretary Bentley Bridgewater: 'Found by Bridgewater in steel cupboard under Director's office & returned to this Dept.'<sup>33</sup> By then the war was over and Stein himself was dead. He died in Kabul in October 1943 without seeing in print the much-anticipated catalogue of the Dunhuang manuscripts. It would not be published until 1957.

With victory in Europe declared on 8 May 1945, little time

was lost in transferring material in the tunnel back up the hill and into the National Library of Wales. By 23 May the tunnel had been emptied of its contents. After five years continuous operation, the power was turned off the next day. The material in the tunnel could not return to London immediately as the National Library of Wales librarian's report to the governors on June 14, 1945 made clear:

Now, with the passing of the danger which has hovered over us for five years and more, the evacuated collections are beginning to return to their homes. . . Some of them, however, have at present no homes – or only bomb-damaged homes – to which to return, and the sanctuary which we have afforded them will obviously have to be continued for some time longer.<sup>34</sup>

It was a year before the British Museum's collections at Aberystwyth returned to Bloomsbury. Between 2 May and 14 May 1946, they were loaded into railway containers for the return journey to London. Altogether 25 containers were used and the material weighed more than 90 tons.<sup>35</sup> Leveen remained grateful for the refuge in Wales where he noted friendships were formed, manuscripts were microfilmed and scholars and historians visited. He wrote that: 'The torch of learning was far from being extinguished in Aberystwyth during these years.'<sup>36</sup>

In London, war losses to the British Museum in Bloomsbury and to the Newspaper Library at Colindale – where more than 5000 volumes of English provincial newspapers were destroyed – justified the policy of unprecedented evacuation of treasures. Forsdyke would later write: 'Of the collections that had been dispersed nothing was lost, nothing damaged.'<sup>37</sup>

The Aberystwyth tunnel is derelict today. Its entrance is behind a locked metal door. The National Library of Wales receives few requests to view it. Inside, dangling electrical wires are the only indication that it once had power. Flashlights illuminate graffiti on the white-washed walls, the result of recent unauthorised visitors. Whether painted by Buddhist monks in Dunhuang's caves or scrawled by Welsh graffitiists, the impulse to leave an enduring mark on walls seems irresistible. Midway along the tunnel is a second metal door that once secured the British Museum's section. Its rusty bars, redolent of a jail cell, stand open as though its captive has long fled.

Stein's manuscripts were among the many beneficiaries of the decision to remove cultural treasures from London during World War II. The construction of the Aberystwyth tunnel in which the Dunhuang scrolls were stored was a bold and far-sighted experiment that prompted the creation of other underground refuges for works of artistic, literary and cultural significance. The tunnel proved to be among the safest of all the war-time repositories. For the second time in their long life, Aurel Stein's scrolls owe their continued survival in part to their concealment in a man-made chamber.

## Notes

- 1 Lionel Barnett to Aurel Stein, 20 August 1918. Bodleian Stein MS.65.
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 William L. Davies, 'War-time Evacuation to the National Library of Wales', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion: Session 1945*. London, 1946, p. 171.
- 4 National Library of Wales council minutes, 21 October, 1937.
- 5 N.J. McCamley, *Saving Britain's Art Treasures from the Nazis*, Barnsley, 2003, pp. 14–18.
- 6 Derman Christopherson, 'Reminiscences of Operational Research in World War II by some of its practitioners', *The Journal of Operational Research Society*, Vol 43, Issue 6 (1992), pp. 569–573.
- 7 David Jenkins, *A Refuge in Peace and War*, Aberystwyth, 2002, p. 267.
- 8 British Museum Standing Committee Minutes, 8 October 1938.
- 9 British Museum Standing Committee Minutes, 10 December 1938.
- 10 John Forsdyke, 'The Museum in War-time', in *The British Museum Quarterly* 15 (1952), pp. 1–8.
- 11 Fire salvage list, 21 October 1938. Air Raid Precautions, file 1 of 2. Department of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts. British Library archives.
- 12 Marjorie Caygill, '1939: Evacuating the BM's treasures', *British Museum Society Bulletin* 62 (1989), pp. 17–21.
- 13 Jacob Leveen, 'The British Museum Collections in Aberystwyth', reprinted from *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1946), pp. 1–7.
- 14 British Museum Standing Committee Minutes, 14 October, 1939.
- 15 P.R. Harris, *A History of the British Museum Library*, London, 1998, p. 553.
- 16 Jacob Leveen, *op. cit.*
- 17 Lionel Giles, *Six Centuries at Tunhuang*, London, 1944, p. 6. See also Frances Wood and Mark Barnard, *The Diamond Sutra, The Story of the World's Earliest Date Printed Book*, London, 2010, p. 86.
- 18 Librarian's Report to the Governors, June 14, 1945. National Library of Wales: Grant in Aid, December 1944-October 1946. National Archives file T162/851.
- 19 Giles to Forsdyke, 11 November 1939. Air Raid Precautions, file 2 of 2. British Library archives.
- 20 Forsdyke to Giles, 18 November 1939. *Ibid.*
- 21 John Forsdyke, 'The Museum in War-time', *op. cit.*
- 22 British Museum Standing Committee Minutes, 12 October 1940.
- 23 Forsdyke, John. 'The Museum in War-time', *op. cit.*
- 24 British Museum Standing Committee Minutes, 5 April 1942.
- 25 After the war, a plaque at the library's entrance acknowledged that the official military history of World War I was completed and World War II's was begun during the residence there of the historical section of the War Cabinet.
- 26 John Forsdyke, 'The Museum in War-time', *op. cit.*
- 27 Leveen to Fulton 5 April 1941. Air Raid Precautions, file 2 of 2. British Library archives.
- 28 Leveen to Fulton, 9 April 1941. *Ibid.*
- 29 Jacob Leveen, 'The British Museum Collections in Aberystwyth', *op. cit.*
- 30 British Museum Standing Committee Minutes, 11 July 1942.
- 31 Leveen to Fulton, 8 June 1942. Air Raid Precautions, file 2 of 2, *op. cit.*
- 32 Department of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts to Whitney, 5 June 1943 (unsigned copy). Air Raid Precautions, file 2 of 2. British Library archives.
- 33 File note, 28 May 1946, *ibid.*
- 34 Librarian's Report to the Governors, 14 June, 1945, *op. cit.*
- 35 Jacob Leveen, 'The British Museum Collections in Aberystwyth', *op. cit.*
- 36 Jacob Leveen, *ibid.*
- 37 Report of the Trustees, 1966. British Museum, London, 1967, p. 20.